



Little Badman and the Invasion of the Killer Aunties

Books Reviewed:

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Editorial Choice:

New Talent

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Humza Khan is a 12-year-old ninja-rapper-gangster with huge plans for his future. Unfortunately, he also suffers from debilitating stage fright and has the 'greatest cricket coach Pakistan has ever known' for a father, which means that his opportunities for world domination are rather limited. When not laying down rap tracks and losing vital cricket matches for their school team, Humza and his friends, Umer and Wendy, begin to notice that the teachers from their school are slowly disappearing. Even more worrying, they are being replaced by sinister aunties from the local Asian community, whose only objective seems to be to regularly feed the pupils a wide variety of sugary snacks. Clearly all is not as it seems, but what can Humza do when nobody will take him seriously, either as a rapper or as a detective?

Little Badman, the first collaboration between Humza Arshad and Henry White was an absolute delight to read, and I genuinely loved it. Even though it may be their first foray into children's fiction, the writers' background in comedy shines through. The book features a wide range of diverse characters but, crucially, never forgets that an entertaining and exciting plot should always be at the centre of a good story, and not the characters' ethnicity or religious background. The main characters are vibrant and easy to empathise with, and the ever-changing relationship dynamics between them will be familiar to all children. There were several times when I laughed out loud at Humza's frustrations with his family and friends, as well as at the references to rappers such as Tupac. The plot inevitably veers into the realms of science-fiction in the second half of the book, but it's done in a way that builds upon the energy of the earlier chapters and seems (almost) believable.

Little Badman reminded me of the **My Brother is a Superhero** series by David Solomons, with its lively writing, contemporary setting and plots featuring ludicrously over-complicated plans for world domination. Children will love for its exciting story and, just as importantly, it's another book that will reach out to an audience who may not often see themselves represented in children's literature. I'm already looking forward to the next book from this pair and will be recommending **Little Badman** at every possible opportunity.

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